

Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary



Research Vessel *Manta*

Length: 82 feet, 10 inches

Breadth: 30 feet

Endurance: 600 nautical miles

Cruise Speed: 27 knots

Engines: Two Caterpillar C32 ACERT

Horsepower: 3,200 overall

Propulsion: Hamilton 571-Water Jets

Accommodations: 14 people for 5 days; 25 people for day trips

The mission of the NOAA vessel *Manta* is to conduct research, monitoring, education, public outreach, enforcement and emergency response-related operations in Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary and the northwestern Gulf of Mexico. Designed with flexibility in mind, the *Manta*'s ability to adapt to the goals of a project will make it a valuable tool for the sanctuary and its partners. The *Manta* will greatly enhance the staff's ability to respond to natural events such as hurricanes, coral diseases, and bleaching, and also to respond to human disturbances such as oil spills, anchoring, and illegal fishing activities.

The *Manta* will facilitate a variety of projects that will contribute to effective management of sanctuary resources. Projects include:

- Detailed seafloor mapping
- Habitat characterization
- Collection of critical real-time data to enhance the sanctuary's ability to predict larval dispersal, and respond to potential threats from coastal and industrial impact events
- Description of the input of larval fish and other marine inhabitants from northwestern Gulf of Mexico reefs and banks
- Tracking regional movements of key species
- Monitoring the health of the coral reefs and communities
- Educating volunteers, sanctuary visitors, teachers and students about the sanctuary
- Provide practical experience for university students

The *Manta* will leverage the resources of many partners, including Texas A&M University, University of Texas, University of Calgary, University of Houston, Florida International University, Smithsonian Institute, NOAA Fisheries, George Mason University, Wildlife Conservation Society, Bainbridge College, Minerals Management Service, Texas Parks and Wildlife, Moody Gardens, Florida Fish and Wildlife, National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science and Mote Marine Laboratory.

The *Manta* will be housed on Pelican Island, home of Texas A&M University – Galveston.

